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Abstract

In a globalizing urban India, middle-class parents are extremely anxious about their child's success and future in a competitive world. In this context, the present article attempts to capture middle-class educated Indian fathers' thoughts, feelings, and contributions in ensuring children's success, through primary research conducted in the city of Baroda in western India using qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive data and fathers' voices highlight their notions of achievement, the nature and extent of their involvement in different areas of their children's lives, namely, providing, guiding and mentoring, practical and emotional support, communication, education, and extracurricular activities. Fathers' vision of a successful child, nature of involvement and their reasoning are in consonance with their desire for involvement in promoting the child's cognitive and social competence, and passing on *sanskar*, a unique aspect of Hindu culture.

Keywords

fathering/father involvement, urban India, parenting, children's success

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Introduction

The discourse on fathering today has moved from blaming men for underinvolvement as fathers to recognizing that men have been making small steps toward greater involvement in their children's lives. An upcoming notion within policy is to find ways to encourage fathers' participation in children's lives and view them as co-contributors to gender equity and family well-being (Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood, 2012; Barker & Pawlak, 2011). Within India, the earlier recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995), was reiterated in the conference on "Gender and the Care Regime" organized by UNICEF and the Indian Social Sciences Trust (2009) which urged the involvement of men as partners in responsible parenthood and child welfare. Scholars such as Raju (2001) and Verma et al. (2006) have argued that, within Indian society the image of a real man is constructed as someone who takes care of his children, wife, parents, and siblings and assumes responsibility for the family. Experiments by the Community Aids Sponsorship Program in Delhi, Centre for Nutrition Education and Health Awareness in Ahmadabad in 1998 and by Finger and Barnett in the Philippines in 1994, as cited in Raju (2001) show that one can effectively draw on this sense of duty and responsibility toward family to start a dialogue on fathers' involvement in the well-being of children and women. Such an approach demands an unraveling of what father involvement means and also focuses on understanding various dimensions of fathering roles beyond practical caregiving. Past research in India, emerging from the studies on parenting, women and work, clearly indicate fathers' limited role in domestic and caregiving activities. However, recent research shows that fathers are concerned about and involved with children in many other ways (see the section on past research), which needs further understanding and validation within the Indian context. In this article, we showcase educated middle-class Indian fathers' contributions to children's lives by obtaining an "insider's view" to capture their experiences, thoughts, and feelings in view of the following research questions:

- What is the nature and extent of urban educated Indian fathers' involvement with their children and how they feel about their own involvement?
- How do fathers define children's success and achievement? Does this definition connect with why and how fathers are involved in their children's lives?

We first frame the parenting ethos in contemporary urban India and present literature that shows fathers' roles in ensuring child's success and achievement. Then, we present analysis based on primary data from urban Indian fathers that capture fathers' notions about children's success and the nature and extent of their involvement in helping children achieve success.

Parenting Ethos in Contemporary Urban India

India is the second most populated nation in the world, which houses 16% of the world population, almost 30% of which are urban, comprising 54 million households (Sharma & Haub, 2011; World Factbook, 2010). This rapid, all encompassing change across the labor market and work structures is due to a globalized economy, influence of technology and media revolutions, improved educational and economic opportunities, and migration. Family structures have changed drastically with the nuclear household as the dominant form in urban areas (Singh, 2010). The legal frameworks and feminist movements advocate equality for women and democratization of family. Men and women in the current context have increasing personal and career aspirations influencing family life, parental roles, and expectations of children.

Indian parents today assign great importance to children's success in professional as well as personal lives resulting in increased focus on developing friendly relationships with children. Such families are also confronted with new challenges of altered norms, and reduced time and support from the extended family or the state. Therefore, many "fathers and mothers together" desire to engage in different types of activities and bring different skills to child rearing to contribute to child's well-being and, make every possible attempt to make their child a high achiever, as reflected by research on urban middle-class families (Datta, 2007; Gore, 2003; Sinha, 2003; Sriram, Karnik, & Ali, 2002).

Fathers' Role in Supporting Child's Success: Cultural Conceptions

Fathers in India play an important role in their children's lives. Traditionally, fathering is part of the duties of a householder and a father is expected to perform his *swadharma* (right course of action in life) for the family's welfare, and to fulfill the important roles of provider, guide, mentor, and nurturer and pass on *sanskar* (Kapoor, 2000; Seymour, 1999). *Sanskar*, the most unique aspect of Hindu culture refers to the purification and refinement of inner consciousness, acquired through childhood experiences when children

imbibe conduct and values that become part of the subconscious; this develops in a person the ability to discriminate right from wrong, and makes him or her more dynamic, valuable and responsible toward self and society. The process focuses on three aspects—purification of a person, making up for deficiencies, and enrichment of values (Sanskaram Vidyapeeth, 2011). There are several stories, for example, *Indian culture—sanskar* (Verma and Verma, 2008) and *Panchatantra* (tales of wisdom) that expose children to values, principles and strategies of leading a successful life, and navigating a variety of situations (Panchatantra.org, 2011). *Sanskar* also refers to the 16 rituals and ceremonies performed at different stages in life. As stated by Madan (2010), a father has to initiate the child into education with a ceremony. He is also expected to arrange for tutors, books, and learning materials, and monitor the process by contact and communication.

An example from Indian mythology describes a father (a king named Ashwapati) who arranged for his daughter's all-round development, which enabled her to conquer the god of death, with the power of her wisdom (Deshpande, 1996). The way a father fulfills his duties and the good deeds (*karma*) he does for his children can earn him merit (*punya*) and pave the way to salvation. Hindu culture also recognizes that one's conduct is shaped in accordance with the demands of the changing context (referred to as *kala*) and place referred to as *Desa*. These prescriptions also state that efforts required (explained as *Shrama*) for achieving a goal vary according to the situation and the innate characteristics (explained as *Guna*) of people involved (Kakar & Kakar, 2007). The Hindu view has quite a few parallels with the concept of the generative fathering framework that views fathering as an ethical call with desire to nurture the next generation, shaped by contextual factors (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997).

Glimpses of positive fathering have also appeared in recent television programs, advertisements, news articles (Mohan Raj, 2010) and magazines (Datta, 2007). A recent program on Zee TV, titled "Pitrutva ko Shraddhanjali" meaning a "Tribute to Fatherhood" (Chaya, 2010) depicted the indispensability of fathers through popular Hindi film songs. The songs portrayed fathers' close relationship with their children, highlighted fathers' ability to inspire children for achievement and to do good deeds, teach responsibility and the correct path of action, teach discipline by reprimanding the child for his or her own welfare, save for future and for medical treatments, and the like. Essays written by daughters on their fathers (Desai, D'Souza, & Shukla, 1999), and the well-known collection of letters written by the late Jawaharlal Nehru to his daughter Indira Gandhi (Gandhi, 2004) validate the key role that Indian fathers have played in their daughters' success.

Past Research

Research on fathering in India is still emerging; though a study by Ramu (1987) on dual earner families three decades ago found that 50% to 70% of fathers were involved in tasks related to schooling and education, recreation and hobbies. Fathers also fulfill several roles to support the child's development holistically in these areas; are involved in their child's education, play, guidance, mentoring, problem solving; participate in child's upbringing; and desire to be friendlier with children (Bhattacharya, 2002; Malghani, 2004; Padma, 1995; Saraff, 2010; P. Shah, 2007, Sriram, Eckensberger, & Sandhu, 2002).

Scholars have documented that Indian middle-class fathers listen to children, understand their point of view, model good behavior, encourage the children to achieve goals, provide opportunities, extracurricular activities, attend to school admissions, monitor children's studies, and create awareness about the various career options (Shah & Kapadia, 2007; Sriram, Karnik, & Ali, 2002). Goel and Sharma (in press) found that urban Indian fathers influence academic achievement of boys. Most fathers show authoritative parenting style irrespective of age and gender (Shah & Kapadia, 2007).

Research on fathers' involvement in everyday care of young children also clearly illustrate that fathers are not equal partners, even in dual-earner families (Rajadhyaksha & Smita, 2004; Suppal & Roopnarine, 1999). Although there is evidence within Indian cultural thought and limited empirical work to indicate that fathers are involved in children's lives in many ways, it has neither been acknowledged nor understood fully in its varied dimensions. We still know very little about what fathers' aspirations for children are, and how they think and feel about their parenting responsibilities and roles. What they do for their children on an everyday basis, beyond just practical caregiving activities, particularly for older children also needs exploration to capture fathering in a changing context. The present study aims to advance our understanding of fathering in India by studying the phenomenon through an expanded conceptual template and capturing an "emic" perspective, influenced by Hindu culture.

Sample, Measures, and Procedure

The analysis in this article is based on data collected in the city of Baroda (a city with a large university and many industries in the western part of India) from a middle-class population of educated fathers in 2003 and 2007. Middle class in any culture is known to initiate new trends and set new norms

and hence is an apt choice for capturing roles of fathers with high aspirations for children. Deutsche Bank Research (2010) estimates this group to be slightly less than 30% of the population in India.

We used a mixed method approach with two samples. The first sample comprised 12 purposively chosen educated middle-class fathers (graduates, postgraduates, and professional degree holders) representing different professions ranging from employment with the government or private sector to business, with children aged 6 to 21 years (to represent different stages of fathering experiences) and half had working wives. In-depth, free-flowing repeated interviews on each participant's notions and experiences of fathering were conducted. The second sample included 120 educated fathers contacted through schools catering to middle-class populations. Two thirds had a bachelor's degree, one third a master's/doctoral or professional degree and belonged to different occupations. Fathers were purposively chosen to equally represent children of ages 9 to 10 years (middle childhood, Grade 5) and 14 to 15 years (teenage, Grade 9), boys and girls, nuclear and joint households. We chose fathers of school-age children as this is the time when Indian parents focus on providing a variety of opportunities to the children to ensure that they become successful. A semistructured survey was conducted on this second sample.

We used two tools to collect data. The first one was a parental involvement schedule developed by the authors, based on data from Phase 1 of the study. We also used the framework developed in the West by Palkovitz (1997). It had 65 items across six domains (planning and providing, communication, practical and emotional support, teaching and extracurricular activities, guiding and mentoring, and availability and shared activities) to be marked based on the frequency of involvement of mother, father, and others in various activities; fathers were asked to indicate if they were satisfied with their inputs, or desired less or more involvement. We also used a semistructured questionnaire with open-ended questions to understand fathers' notion of academic success and the reasons behind their involvement. A telephonic consent was obtained from the fathers before sending the schedule to them through their children. To improve the reliability and validity of the data, the tools were content-validated by experts; the researchers answered questions of fathers over the phone, maintained reflective notes, critically analyzed response rates and patterns, and had dialogues with the children. The findings from qualitative and quantitative data were combined to provide a better understanding of middle-class Indian fathers' notions and contributions to children's lives.

Results

The in-depth interviews show that these urban middle-class educated fathers have clear aspirations and goals for their children and their emphasis is on providing the best to the child to ensure his or her success. To them, raising children entails handling their routine affairs along with building a strong foundation for the future and that a father should continue to be an enduring support in a child's life under all circumstances. They acknowledge that children assume center stage in their lives in the first 10 to 12 years. After this period, the nature of their role changes, but the importance accorded to children does not. We first describe the nature and extent of fathers' involvement in children's lives, and what they feel about their involvement. In the second section, we examine fathers' notions of success and achievement, and see how it connects with their reasons for involvement across domains.

Nature and Extent of Fathers' Involvement

In this section, we present data from the parent involvement schedule to describe the nature and extent of involvement of fathers across the six domains of involvement and also gain an insight into fathers' feelings. Parents rated the frequency of their involvement from *always* to *never*, with scores ranging from 4 to 0. Fathers also stated whether they were satisfied or wished to do more across each of the six domains. A mean score was computed across all items in a specific domain and for both father and mother to obtain a comparative picture. Percentages for individual items in a domain were based on number of fathers who reported involvement in a task "always" or "most of the time," and also whether the father wished to do more.

Planning and Providing for Children's Needs

From Table 1, it is evident that these urban middle-class Indian fathers are highly involved in multiple domains in their children's lives, and we describe activities they engage in always or most of the times. Ninety-three percent of the fathers in the sample plan for children's future, choose children's school, 98% save for children's education, and 73% are involved in obtaining children's important documents. Eighty-five percent of the fathers provide money to fulfill children's needs—for sports (72%) and learning materials (86%)—and fulfill their recreational needs (75%). More than three fourths of them plan celebrations/vacations, and half schedule appointments (56%).

Table 1. Fathers' Involvement in Children's Life

Tasks	Fathers' Involvement (%)
Planning and providing (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean scores: father = 3.19, mother = 2.95; 18% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Planning celebrations/vacations for the child	77/79
Planning for the child's future (education, training); saving for education	93/98
Choice of school and medium of instruction for the child	93
Schedule appointments for child's needs (e.g., meeting teachers, doctors, friends)	56
Providing the child with entertainment/sports/learning materials/fulfill needs	72/86/75/85
Obtaining needed documents for the child's education and career (birth certificates, mark sheets, migration certificates, etc.)	73
Guiding and mentoring (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean scores: father = 3.16, Mother = 3.44; 23% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Consciously avoid doing things that set a bad example and protect from bad habits	92/91
Advice/help the child to solve his or her problems	86/73
Set rules, limits/help follow them	65/75
Instill important values/moral guidance right and wrong/correct negative behavior	81/80/82
Monitor habits/protect from bad habits	83
Monitor friendships and whereabouts	61
Provide opportunities and support to the child to take up responsibility	38
Practical and emotional support (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean scores: father = 3.16, mother = 3.44; 29% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Encourage the child to accept and overcome failures	92
Relieve the tensions and stress of the child and discuss his or her problems	81
Praise the child for being good, doing the right thing, and doing a task well	81
Teach the child to make and respect decisions	80
Being a friend to the child	78

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Practical and emotional support (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean scores: father = 3.16, mother = 3.44; 29% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Encourage and help the child accomplish his or her tasks on an everyday basis	70
Practically arrange a comfortable study environment for the child	65
Communication (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean scores: father = 2.94, mother = 3.25; 32% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Answer the questions the child asks out of curiosity	83
Talk to the child on the phone	73
Spend time talking with child on hopes, wishes, interests	70/75
Talk about his or her day when child desires	55/66
Express love verbally or with gestures	58
Teaching and extracurricular activities (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean: father = 2.61, mother = 3.03, 37% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Inspire or motivate the child for achievement/good performance regularly	88
Teach/encourage/support child in extracurricular activities:	
a. Sports, competitions	65/71
b. Music, dancing, driving, drawing, swimming etc.	9/18/19/28/4
Expose the child to literature, books, events, special TV programs, and so on	61/74
Monitor child's progress in school, tuition classes/extracurricular activities	53
Set study times for the child	44
Availability and shared activities (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean: father = 2.47; mother = 2.80; 29% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Take the child to religious service/events	49
Take the child to the doctor during illness	88
Attend parent-teacher meetings, school activities	50/57
Take lead roles in school and community (parent-teacher association, etc.)	28
Drop and pick up the child from school or other places	26/38
Accompany the child to places he or she does not like to go alone	53

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Availability and shared activities (range of responses: 4 = <i>always</i> , 0 = <i>never</i>). Mean: father = 2.47; mother = 2.80; 29% of fathers wish for more involvement	Always and most of the time
Adjust work schedule as per the child's needs	47
Play with the child (indoor, outdoor)	38
Have meals, read, watch TV, spend time as child likes	86/39/58/53
Take the child out for enjoyment/or learning	
a. Movies	40
b. Gardens, restaurant, library, fairs, picnic, and so on.	15/16/15/12/9

Note: Data obtained on parental involvement scale, N = 120.

Krishnakant (a government officer and father of a 14-year-old boy and 20-year-old girl) and Yogesh (a bank manager with a 14-year-old son), echo what most fathers feel:

I have spent on education and taken care of all requirements/needs such as tuitions, books, rickshaw rides, school uniform, shoes etc. I fulfill their desires for clothes or transportation according to group expectations, so they should not feel inferior or deprived.

We note that among all domains, fathers have the highest mean score of 3.19 on a scale of 4 in this domain of planning and providing where mothers score lower. However, 18% of them wish to do even more for their children.

Fathers like Kuldeep, an engineer in a state electricity board, with a son aged 14 years and a daughter aged 9 years even wishes to alter their course of life. He says,

I have filed for Canadian immigration so I took a course in French, which will add points to my application. So if we get a visa we plan to go, we may even have to study there but we are taking a chance only for the sake of the children's future.

Guiding and Mentoring

Table 1 shows that these educated fathers are highly involved in guiding and mentoring children (a mean score of 3.16), well supported by mothers (mean score 3.41). More than 90% of fathers protect their children from negative

influences, are conscious of their own behaviors, and avoid setting a bad example. Jigesh, an engineer and father of a 14-year-old girl and 10-year-old boy, and Krishnakant, a government officer emphasize their role as models:

I don't hold any authority if I have wrong habits. I watch my habits and interactions very carefully. Things cannot be taught but the atmosphere at home should help children imbibe the right values.

More than 80% instill important values, provide moral guidance, correct negative behaviors, and monitor children's habits to ensure good health and appropriate behavior. They give advice and suggestions (86%) and help children solve problems (73%). About 60% monitor children's whereabouts and friends, set rules, and 75% help follow rules. Dinesh, an engineer and a public-sector employee with a 6-year-old boy, clarifies about controlling his son's undesirable behavior:

One time my son hit his grandmother and refused to say sorry, as it hurt his ego. I refused to go to work till he had done so. By the time I returned he had apologized several times after he realised his mistake.

He also feels that fathers have better skills than mothers in some respects:

When it comes to meeting the demands made by children, you can't always say yes. I know how to say no. The child learns that he cannot take parents for granted, that can have a damaging effect. The child becomes goal-oriented and makes decisions. Fathers can train children better in these aspects.

Despite these inputs, about 23% wish to do more for their children on a daily basis.

Practical and Emotional Support

Fathers support children in several ways and obtain a score of 3.10 for the domain, although mothers do it more frequently. More than 90% of fathers regularly encourage their children to accept and overcome failures. About 80% help children to relieve tension and stress, and to make decisions; praise children for doing things right; and focus on being a friend to their children. About 70% provide systematic instructions to accomplish everyday tasks, and 65% provide children with a comfortable study environment.

However, 29% of them wish to do much more than what they are doing at present.

Communication With Children

Fathers receive slightly lower mean scores (2.94 on a scale of 4) as compared with mothers (3.25) in the domain of communication. Eighty percent of fathers respond to children's questions; 70% to 75% talk to their children about interests, hopes, wishes, and 66% are available when their children desire to speak to them.

Karan believes that

A father's communication with his children should be an ongoing, dynamic process without distance. My father was strict and I was scared of him and could not communicate, but today my child has no fear and shares everything with me, which is fun.

Kuldeep shares,

My daughter prefers to be with me rather than my wife. If I am around she likes to eat and spend time with me as I try to understand her thought processes so as to know her better, relieve her stress. She is our good luck charm in life and I am sensitive to her needs.

About three fourths of fathers regularly maintain communication through telephone, but only about 58% express their love openly, on a regular basis.

Sanjay (an engineer in a small firm, with a 9-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter) fondly recollects,

My children are on my mind even when I am at work. They ring me up at office every few hours. So we are always in touch and I get messages. My daughter came to me and put her head on my shoulder. I understood that she did not want me to go to work. I wish to be able to always connect.

About a third of fathers wish not only to do more but also to communicate better with children, like Sharad who says,

My friends and family know me to be a loving father. But I do not always express this or spare time to listen to my children every day, like their mom, with whom they can talk everything.

Vinay feels frustrated about his lack of skills to talk to his teenage daughter:

I feel so frustrated that I cannot communicate properly with her. She enjoys going out with friends at odd hours, which I do not approve of and get irritated and angry! Instead, I wish I could learn to reason with her, have a conversation without losing my temper.

Teaching and Extracurricular Activities of Children

Fathers obtain a mean score of 2.6 for involvement in teaching and extracurricular activities. Fathers are most involved (88%) in inspiring their children for regular performance. They expose children to important literature, events, and television programs (61% and 74%, respectively). As Dinesh puts it:

We use the time when our six-year-old son brushes his teeth every morning to show him the pictures in the Gujarati newspaper. In another 2 or 3 years we will also start getting an English language newspaper. Through the photos, we try to teach him a little about the events of the previous day. I do as much as I can. I have developed this habit and my son has developed the interest. Fortunately I have seen the result. Our son won two quiz contests. He was able to recall a lot from our daily conversations about the newspaper.

Fathers encourage their children to engage in sports and competitions (65%), but are less involved in daily tasks such as supervising their child's homework (38%), or setting study time for their children (44%). They check, enquire, and keep tabs on children's progress despite having less time on a daily basis.

Jigesh says, "When my daughter takes a test at school, I would call home; we would discuss the questions she could not answer and assess how she has done."

Krishnakant says,

Yesterday I asked him to write a short piece in English. He made a lot of mistakes but assumed that he had written very well. I bought him some books, took positive steps, so he improves, but I did not scold him.

Some fathers like Sharad (a government officer in the electricity department with a 15-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son) use their networks to

help their children. He explains, "My 14-year-old daughter got admission in tuition classes due to my wide network of people because of work in electricity department, and with no problems, with respect to opportunities or support for achievement."

It is evident that many fathers want their children to be high achievers and competent with about 37% of fathers wishing to do more for their children.

Shared Activities

Fathers feel that they need to devote more time to their children (about 30%), and their mean score for this domain is only 2.47 which is the lowest across domains (Table 2), although 88% take their children to the doctor during illness, and 86% have meals together. More than 50% watch television and spend time with their children. They read to or play with their children (38%), take them to religious places and other events (49% and 31%) and, 46% manage to adjust work schedules to cater to children's needs on a regular basis. Highly involved fathers plan their work or job schedules in consonance with their fathering role.

Pranay, who is a postgraduate employed in a private firm with a 14-year-old girl says, "I did not want to go elsewhere or travel much due to my attachment to my child. I gave up good career options as they meant being away from the family."

Ketan (an engineer in the government department, with a 14-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son) reinforces the concept by reiterating that he left his job in a private industry, so that he could spend more time with his daughter.

Only some fathers in this sample have outings with children: taking them to the zoo, library, and garden, and so on (9% to 31%). About 30% want to do more and feel guilty and worried about not being able to do enough.

Middle-Class Fathers' Definition of Success and Achievement for Children: In Tandem With Fathers' Reasons for Involvement

In this section, we summarize data from written responses to two open-ended questions by fathers and analyze it in connection to the reasons stated by them for their involvement across the six domains. In the first question the father is asked to explain what academic success and achievement means to him. In the second question he is asked why he is involved in various activities with his child. This question consists of 10 subquestions relating to the

Table 2. Fathers' Definition of Academic Success and Achievement and Reasons for Fathers' Involvement

Aspects of Emphasis for Academic Success and Achievement	Frequency (%) of Fathers (N = 120)	Reasons for Fathers' Involvement Across the Six Domains	Frequency (%) of Responses ^a as a Fraction of the 2,380 Responses From All 120 Fathers
1. Why is academic success/achievement important for the child?			
Good future, good career, success in competitive world	36 (30.0)	For learning and development of social competence	375 (17.0)
Enhancement of personal development	45 (38.0)	To develop child's interest, knowledge, self-awareness, confidence, motivation, independence, and responsibility	522 (22.4)
2. What comprises academic success/achievement?			
Good grades and extracurricular activities	24 (20.0)	For getting better grades via new opportunities, experiences, and sustaining motivation	432 (19.3)
Competence/knowledge in all fields, that is, an all-rounder	19 (16.0)	For child competence (skill, efficiency)/help him or her reach excellence by understanding strengths and limitations and needs	324 (15.0)
Good human values	10 (8.0)	To protect the child from bad habits and promote appropriate behavior	192 (8.5)
Success in education along with good human values	14 (12.0)	To nurture the child into a good human being, with balanced/healthy attitude toward work, life, and people	194 (8.6)
Satisfaction, enjoyment, and stressfree learning for the child	15 (13.0)	To relieve the child from tension and stress	190 (9.0)
Parent is satisfied about child's success	9 (7.0)	To improve my attachment/relationship with my child	150 (7.0)
Others	9 (7.0)	Others	31 (1.4)

Note: Data summarized from responses to open-ended questions by fathers.

a. Multiple responses percentages for each category are calculated as a percentage of the total number of 2,380 responses obtained.

reasons why the father is involved in the six domains described above. Fathers were asked to give three reasons for activities that they engaged in. Examples of these reasons are "I want to remain updated on my child's progress, needs and difficulties at school and elsewhere because. . . ." This generated 2,380 responses from all fathers ($n = 120$) across the 10 subquestions, with an average of 19 to 20 reasons mentioned by each father. These were analyzed using the grounded theory approach (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The data were thematically clustered into nine categories in relation to the description of academic success.

Table 2 shows how fathers define success and achievement and why they think academic achievement is important. Thirty percent of the fathers feel that academic success is necessary to ensure a good career and future for their children, and 38% feel that it is important to enhance personal development of children, which include qualities such as self-awareness, confidence, independence, responsibility, social skills, and support of others.

The reasons offered by fathers highlight that they focus on helping children learn better and to promote their social competence (17%) in order to help them succeed. They feel that this could develop child's interest, knowledge, increase confidence, independence, and sense of responsibility, as indicated by 22.4% of responses. As put by Jignesh,

To me, children's education is of primary importance and our aim is to help children to survive competition. Academic success and achievement help the child to come out of difficult situations, and this improves self awareness and confidence of the child, so he can succeed in various life situations.

Ashish says,

I always ensure that we do not protect him too much, but expose him to real life situations under guidance and provide support, so he becomes independent and confident.

Fathers also define academic success in relation to varied components of success and achievement such as good marks and grades in school, excellence in extracurricular activities where the focus is on performance (20%), and competence in all fields where the focus is on learning (16%). In consonance with this, a very important reason fathers give for why they get involved with their children is that they want to help their children get better grades by

providing new opportunities and sustaining children's motivation (19.3% of responses). As Sanjay puts it,

I tell my son he will have to work harder than I did and sustain his efforts to score well; I talk of people we know who are in a secure position now, so that he is motivated to follow their example.

Pranay says,

I encourage my children to express themselves openly, clarify their doubts, their views about education, or teaching. Their communication skills will contribute to their success, and help them acquire the power of negotiation early in life which I could not.

Fathers say that they desire to make the child competent and help him or her excel by understanding strengths, limitations, and needs (15% of the responses). Jignesh expresses,

We need to analyse the inherent capacity of our child; not every kid can be P.T. Usha (famous female athlete) or Sachin Tendulkar (famous male cricketer). Recognise the child's preferences and interests. If the child cannot speak in front of 5-10 people, it does not mean that he does not have that capacity but needs to build it. We have to recognise the strengths and motivate the child to build upon them.

In all, 20% of fathers focus on good human values in their notions of success, with 8% stating it exclusively and 12% mentioning this in combination with success in education. These correspond to reasons that they provide for their involvement; 17% of responses of fathers highlight "making a child a good human being" and their effort to "protect the child from bad habits" and to promote appropriate behavior and values. A recurrent theme with fathers is the need to impart good *sanskar*, a unique expectation and duty as explained earlier. Yogesh opines that "Parents must consciously create an environment where children learn to discriminate between right and wrong. When children sense a father's abiding love and concern for their well-being, they naturally come to imbibe the right *sanskar*."

Pranay adds to this thought: "I want my daughter not only to be well read and to get success but also know about Indian culture so I request my mother to give her these *sanskars*."

Fathers articulate that good *sanskar* helps the child to be confident about his or her behavior and adjust well in society, which in turn contributes to success.

A much smaller number of fathers reason that their involvement is to relieve children's stress on a daily basis (9%) and some simultaneously use this opportunity for enhancing their relationship/attachment with the child (7%).

Sharad says, "After coming home, I sit with the children for half an hour or even go out with them or I play chess with my son. This gives him confidence, sharpens his skills and also shows that I care."

A common thread that runs through fathers' responses across the entire study is their aspiration to make their child successful by ensuring good grades, all-round development, and right human values (*sanskar*) and, data on involvement and reasons reflect the translation of this aspiration in thought, action, and emotions.

Discussion and Conclusions

Though we are not in a position to generalize the findings to all urban educated middle-class populations due to a purposive sampling and a small sample size, we can certainly shed light on selected dimensions of father's participation, their motivations and feelings, because of methodological triangulation and rigor in qualitative analysis. The findings clearly negate the notions of an uninvolved father and further the understanding of fathering in India in three important ways. First, using an expanded template by Palkovitz (1997) which goes beyond participation in domestic and caregiving activities, and focusing on older children (9-15 years), we see that educated middle-class fathers are involved in almost all activities that the mother does and are more involved as planners and providers than the mother. Second, educated middle-class fathers think that academic success is most important for children, and they construe it as including both academic and social skills. Thus, they see it as their main responsibility and are involved in cultivating both their children's academic and social skills. Third, the influence of Hindu culture and the changing parenting ethos is clearly visible in their actions.

We find that children's welfare, development, and achievement are priorities for fathers in this study. In their definitions of success and achievement, fathers emphasize good grades, varied skills, good human qualities and values, and their children's ability to survive competition. Most fathers display an inner desire to help their children become successful. A few choose jobs

that provide them more time with the children; others adjust their business schedules to attend to children's health care or other issues that they consider important, which reiterates commitment to paternal generativity. This is reflective of a changing child-rearing ethos as noted by Gore (2003) "... where the child has come to be regarded as the centre of the family. The parents' major responsibility now is to ensure every opportunity for the full development of its potential" (p. 2).

We clearly see some elements of Hindu culture at play in fathers' inputs. First, they align more to roles prescribed by culture (Chaturvedi, 2003; Kapoor, 2000; Madan, 2010) such as provider, guide, mentor, protector, and teacher, with fathers displaying highest involvement in planning and providing, followed by guiding, mentoring, and practical and emotional support. This pattern is consistent with previous studies mentioned earlier. Second, we clearly see that fathers' conduct is shaped by the demands of a changing context (*Kala* [time] and *Desa* [place]), as they wish to help the child attain a good future and career and survive a competitive global environment. Beyond fulfilling necessities, they provide a comfortable study environment, entertainment, sports and learning materials; save money through insurance policies; and some plan to migrate to enhance their children's life chances. They also maintain open communication, use guidance strategies to develop their children's interests and skills, and promote social competence to make them successful individuals and good human beings.

These fathers make efforts (*Shrama*) according to the child's age to help in school and college admissions and career choices, and ensure that children are able to access the right opportunities. They encourage extracurricular activities and skills training, monitor children's progress, and adjust their routines to support the child practically and emotionally, in order to make the child skilled, efficient, and attain excellence. Fathers' reasons for involvement highlight emphasis on cognitive and affective aspects of children's development that will enable them to secure better marks and grades and, they provide opportunities, new experiences, sustained motivation, and help to relieve children's stress. Examining the findings from the perspective of *Guna* (father's or child's innate characteristics), we see that only one out of six or seven fathers focus on this dimension in their conceptualization of success and a few acknowledge the need to understand their children's strengths, weaknesses, and limitations, but there is no mention of fathers' characteristics. The findings taken together reaffirm that middle-class Indian fathers are generative and provide a variety of inputs in the nurture of their children. However, they "focus on child's becoming" rather than "the child as a being,"

providing a glimpse of the “Indian urban parenting ethos” that has become more child-centered vis-à-vis competition, similar to the trend documented in Western societies (Lamb, 2010).

Fathers are less involved than mothers in aspects of daily communications and expressions of love, though they desire to ensure that children do not feel neglected. Many fathers wish to be more involved in teaching and extracurricular activities, and desire more shared activities and communications.

Considering the implications of this study, one may use these findings effectively to optimize fathers’ involvement with children in other dimensions, where the focus is on removing barriers and urging fathers toward small changes in their everyday lives without drastically opposing the accepted cultural norms. With other fathers who may be less involved, we may combine the present results with evidence from Western research such as Allen and Daly (2002) or Lamb (2010) to highlight fathers’ positive influence on children’s cognitive functioning, quantitative and verbal skills, grade point average, economic and educational achievement, occupational competencies, and psychological well-being. Children can be encouraged to engage fathers in joint activities such as school work and projects, sports and competitions that will help them learn to respond sensitively to children’s emotional, psychological, social, and practical needs, so that they do not create undue stress and, joint activities at home such as cooking meals and cleaning can bring about more equality in domestic labor.

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